

## The Rice Cooker and the Renal Diet

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**I** LIKE MY rice cooker. It makes perfect rice every time. Rice is a great food for the kidney healthy diet, it is low in potassium and sodium, it is a good source of carbohydrate and energy, and it is versatile for meal planning. Although half of the world's population eats rice and the US consumption of rice has increased, rice is not a staple of many typical American diets.<sup>1</sup>

The rice cooker had its start with the Japanese army and Mitsubishi; however, it was not until Toshiba perfected the electric rice cooker to a simple shut on shut off product in the 1950s that it gained acceptance for home use.<sup>2,3</sup> The rice cooker is now a staple appliance in Japan and many Asian countries. Asia accounts for 90% of the rice consumed globally.<sup>4</sup> The Wall Street Journal states rice cookers have recently gained popularity, as it reports rice cooker aficionados, tourists, are buying high-end models in Japan.<sup>5</sup> Although rice cookers range in price, size, and technologic advances, it is the simple rice cooker with its inexpensive price tag, small size of 1 to 3 cups, and its binary function of cook and warm that is the focus of this article.

The simple rice cooker consists of an electric base, the removable bowl to cook the rice, a measuring cup, a lid made of tempered glass, and often a rice paddle. See [Figure 1](#). The enclosed measuring cup is about 6 ounces, the size of the traditional Japanese rice-measuring tool.<sup>6</sup> The 3-cup rice cooker, which makes up to 6 cups of cooked rice, is widely available in stores and online for under 20 dollars. See [Table 1](#). An online search found 1 version of a 1½ cup-sized rice cooker. Rice cookers for home use can be easily found in up to 10-cup raw or 20-cup cooked sizes. An expert rice taster considered rice cooked this way as good as those made in the expensive high-end cookers.<sup>7</sup>

Moon<sup>8</sup> writes in *Today's Dietitian* that it is the dietitians' role to introduce new cooking methods to the client inter-

ested in eating more healthfully. For the person with chronic kidney disease (CKD), unfamiliar with or inept at cooking rice, a rice cooker might just be the appliance that can add rice to the diet. For as simple a grain that rice is, it is not that easy to cook. Anecdotal tales include that the rice boils over, that it sticks to the pot, that it burns, that it needs to be watched while it cooks, that it is undercooked and hard.<sup>9</sup> The rice cooker resolves those issues, and it allows for the user to focus on other aspects of the meal as the rice essentially takes care of itself. To make rice, the rice cooker user adds rice, measures the water, and presses the lever to cook, and in 20 to 30 minutes, the rice is done, perfectly. The cooker will automatically switch to warm, to keep the cooked rice at serving temperature. Measurement is particularly forgiving in a rice cooker.

However, given the demographics of the CKD population in that lower socioeconomic status is a risk factor for CKD, it is also a point that patients could cook rice on the stove in a typical 2:1 ratio and cook it without mishap and without spending money on another appliance.<sup>10</sup> Older patients, another typical demographic of the end-stage renal disease population, who have been the cook of the family likely know how to make rice. Patients whose dietary pattern includes rice, such as those with Asian, Middle Eastern, or Caribbean traditions are likely to be using rice cookers.<sup>6</sup>

The rice cooker highlighted in this column suggests that preparing rice in a rice cooker is a viable method of including rice in the diet of the person with CKD.



**Figure 1.** Rice cooker.

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**Table 1.** Sample of Rice Cookers Priced Under \$30 Available From an Online Google Search

Rice Cooker	Uncooked Measure Cups	Cooked Measure Cups	Store	Price (\$)
Panasonic SR-3NA Automatic 1.5 Cup (Uncooked)/3 Cups (Cooked) Rice Cooker*	1½	3	Amazon	29.95
Black and Decker RC 3406 3-Cup Dry/6-Cup Cooked Rice Cooker	3	6	Amazon	13.38
			Kmart	13.86
			Target	14.19
			Walmart	15.99
Black and Decker Rice Cooker RC436-3-Cup Dry/6-Cups Cooker	3	6	Macys	19.99
Elite Cuisine 3-Cup Rice Cooker	3	6	Walmart	14.99
IMUSA 3-Cup Nonstick Rice Cooker	3	6	Bed Bath and Beyond	14.99
Oster 4722- 3-Cup (Uncooked) 6-Cup (Cooked) Rice Cooker with Steaming Tray	3	6	Amazon	18.99
			Target	19.99
			Walmart	18.96
Aroma 10-cup (cooked) rice cooker	5	10	Walmart	24.94
IMUSA 5-Cup Nonstick Rice Cooker	5	10	Bed Bath and Beyond	19.99
			Target	19.99
Rival 10-Cup (Cooked) Rice Cooker	5	10	Kmart	22.99
Black and Decker 16-Cup/7-Cup Dry Rice Cooker RC436	7	16	Kohls	19.99
			Macys	29.99
			Walmart	21.30
			Wayfair	25.99
IMUSA 8-cup Nonstick Rice Cooker	8	16	Bed Bath and Beyond	22.99
			Target	22.99

The purpose of the table is to show that there are affordable models of rice cooker widely available in national chains and online for under \$30.00. The 3-cup models are under \$20.00.

Accessed November 01, 2015 and December 14, 2015.

Rice cookers arranged by ascending size. Rice cooker sizes range in 3-10 cup range, with variety of sizes per manufacturer. Not all sizes are listed in the table.

\*The Panasonic 1½ cup rice cooker is listed because of its small size although price is higher than the typical low-end 3-cup rice cookers.

This rice can then be sodium-free, tasty, and require minimal preparation. Rice made in the 3-cup model can be made in small enough quantities for 1 person. Many older patients with CKD, especially the cooks of the family, may have figured out how to make rice in a pot on the stove. For those who dare to try the rice cooker, they may be surprised at how tasty the rice is and how easy it is to prepare.

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